



Make a Potluck Cozy

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SUMMARY

I got this idea from my Mom -- when she brings a hot dish to a potluck, she usually wraps it in old towels so it stays warm in transit. So I decided to refashion a felted wool sweater into a kind of padded envelope to carry potluck dishes in. The food will stay warm, and when you get there, you'll have a built-in trivet to set it on!

Materials

Your favorite potluck dish (I'm using a 9x13 pan)
Cutting board that fits the potluck dish
One large wool sweater, felted in a washing machine see note below
One additional felted wool sweater or blanket for lining
Scissors
Straight pins
Sewing machine and thread
Tape-style Velcro, 10"
Additional felt, buttons, etc. for embellishments (optional)
Hand-sewing needle and embroidery floss (optional)

Note: Different kinds of wool sweaters will behave differently during the felting process. Some will shrink a great deal. Others, hardly at all. I recommend starting with a large-size sweater, so you'll have as much felt to work with as possible. For this project, I'm also using a wool-blend blanket from my local thrift store, which I felted in the washing machine. If you don't have a blanket, you can felt a second sweater.

In addition, I've specified a cutting board for this project that will act as a sturdy base for your cozy. (Don't worry, you'll be able to slide it right out of the cozy when you're not using it.) If you don't have a cutting board in your kitchen that fits, you can also buy rigid plastic sheeting at a home improvement store and have it cut to size. Or check your local dollar store for inexpensive cutting boards.

Step 1 — Make a Potluck Cozy



- Step 1: We're going to build this cozy to fit your favorite potluck dish, so I won't be giving you too many measurements here. To test your sweater's fit, place your potluck dish on top of your cutting board, and slide them together into the body of the sweater. Place one end of the dish near the bottom edge of the sweater, like this....
- The other end of your dish should end up right about here (where I'm pointing) at the top of the sweater. (You'll need this extra space at the top to create a flap closure.)

Step 2



- Step 2: Cut the sleeves off the sweater, following the seam lines. Cut the sweater apart at the shoulder seams, too. Then turn it inside out and sew the bottom edge closed, using a 1/2" seam allowance.

Step 3



- Step 3: Your sweater may be a bit too wide for your dish, like this one is. If that's the case, just slide the dish and cutting board inside and center them between the side seams.
- Place pins along the side seams, placing them so the sweater fits more snugly around the dish. Then, sew new side seams along your pinned lines. Trim the seam allowances to 1/2".

Step 4



- Step 4: Cut away the front panel of the sweater, cutting straight across at the bottom of the neckline. If your sweater has a crew neck instead of a V-neck, you may end up trimming a little more away below the neckline than I am in these photos. This panel, where the front of the sweater was, I'll now be calling the top panel of your cozy. Leave the back panel in place for now; we'll use it later to make a flap.

Step 5



- Step 5: To add an extra layer of insulation to the inside of your cozy, cut another piece of wool felt (again, blanket, sweater -- whatever you have). It should be the same size as the top panel of the cozy. Pin this piece to the top panel of the cozy.

Step 6



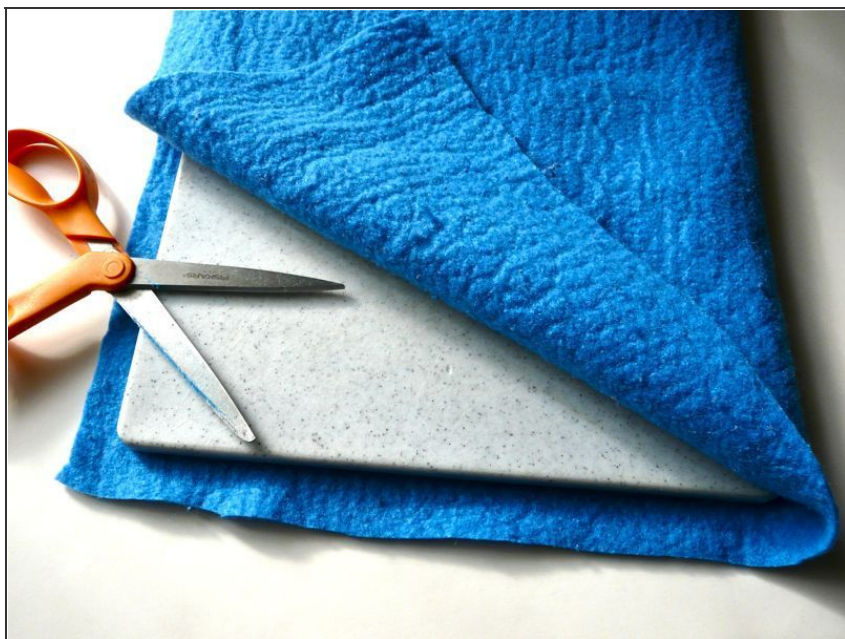
- Step 6: Attach this felt to the cozy by zigzag stitching or serging through all the layers along the side and bottom seam allowances.

Step 7



- Step 7: Turn the cozy right side out again. See how this extra felt insulates the top? Great -- now we'll insulate the bottom, too.

Step 8



- Step 8: Cut another piece of felt that wraps around your cutting board, with 1/2" of extra fabric around the long side, 1/2" at the bottom edge, and 3" at the top. We'll use this to make a simple sleeve.

Step 9



- Step 9: Fold this piece in half and sew along the side and bottom, using a 1/2" seam allowance. Turn the sleeve right side out and slide in your cutting board, as shown. Then, trim away the excess on the top front, so that the top back forms a flap.

Step 10



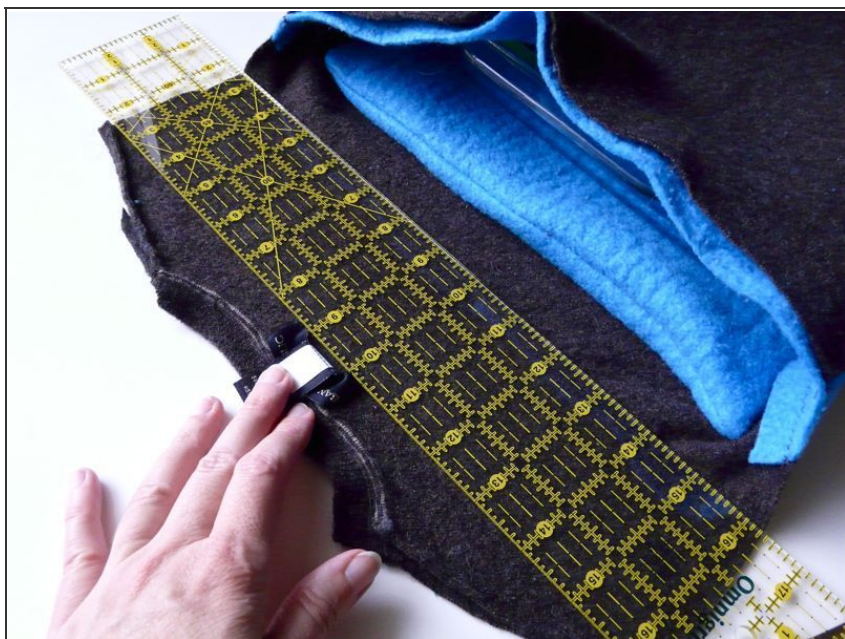
- Step 10: Sew 2" tabs of Velcro to the flap and the sleeve to keep it closed. Slide the insulated cutting board into your cozy. Not only does it protect the bottom (and your hands, when you carry it), you can also slide it out and use it as a trivet at the potluck.

Step 11



- Step 11: Depending on how your sweater is constructed, you may need to make a little adjustment to the opening of your cozy. My sweater was built so that my cozy was a little narrower near the opening, so I opened the side seams a bit and split them. I then zigzag stitched the edges of the sweater to the insulation layer underneath. Presto -- a slightly wider opening! (If your sweater doesn't need this adjustment, go ahead and skip this step.)

Step 12



- Step 12: Cut the back panel of the sweater straight across now, removing the back of the collar ribbing and any labels. The rest of this back panel will become the flap closure for your cozy.

Step 13



- Step 13: Cut another strip of insulating felt that's the same size as as the flap. Pin this piece to the inside of the flap.

Step 14



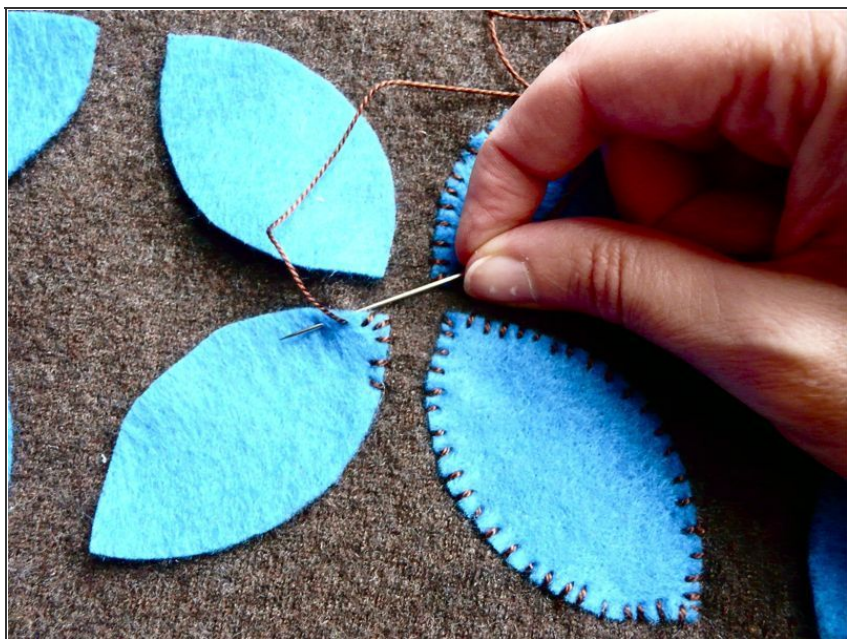
- Step 14: Zigzag stitch the 2 pieces together around all 4 edges.

Step 15



- Step 15: Sew 2" tabs of Velcro to the ends and center of the flap. Sew matching tabs to the body of the cozy.

Step 16



- Step 16: Embellish your cozy any way you like! When I sew on felt shapes like this, I like to glue them in place first, using just a little glue at the centers. That keeps them in position as I whip stitch the edges.

Step 17



- A note on washing your cozy: You can machine wash and dry your cozy, but wool can be unpredictable -- you never know when it might do some more shrinking. So, I recommend washing in cold water and tumble drying on the coolest setting your dryer has.

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